

supplied with the needed plant food. A chief source of fertilizer has been what the Westerner euphemistically and somewhat squeamishly denominates "night soil." This, which in the sewage disposal systems of the modern Occident is completely wasted, and often does positive harm by polluting the rivers, is carefully collected and returned to the fields. The laborer carrying pails of night soil from the cities to the country is one of the most familiar sights—and smells—of China. Legumes, which add nitrogen to the soil, are extensively grown. In some instances they are turned under, before ripe, as green manure. Compost piles are frequent sights. Droppings from animals are carefully collected and used either for fuel or for manure. Ashes are scattered on the cultivated land, with, of course, their potassium and phosphorus. Soil from the canals, probably rich in needed minerals, is also placed on the fields, and sun-dried earthen bricks, when past their usefulness in buildings, may be pulverized and made once more to serve plant life. Rotation of crops is practiced. In many ways the Chinese peasant could give the average Western farmer lessons in conservation.

Some wastefulness there is. In parts of Fukien, for instance, the rice straw is burned to get it out of the way. Elsewhere, because of dearth of fuel, straw which otherwise might be put back on the land is consumed for domestic heating and cooking. The fields must usually provide both fuel and food. Moreover, the comparatively small number of animals make for a shortage in manure and so for a certain handicap in maintaining fertility. Much of the soil is, then, partly impoverished.

The Chinese farmer has acquired great skill in handling water. From the dawn of recorded history he has been

draining swamp
lands, controlling streams, and building canals for
irrigation. To-
day the plains of China proper are usually
traversed by a network
of canals. Millions of acres of hillside and rolling
ground have
been carefully terraced, often at great
expenditure of labor, both
to retain water when flooded for wet rice culture
and to prevent
washing. Water is usually conveyed to the fields
from the canal
or pond in buckets carried by men or by pumps
operated either
by man power or by animals. Hundreds of miles of
dikes have
been constructed and maintained to keep lowlands
from being
flooded. Canals, too, are frequently not only an
aid to irrigation